

BLENDON TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

7161 72nd Ave. Hudsonville, MI 49426 | Phone (616) 875-7707 | May 2009

Township Officials

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Building Inspector - Jim Scholma

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Planning Commission Members -

Mark Leathead, Chairman

Ron Wind, Rick Lamer, Paul Blauwkamp,

Paul Potter, Jim Vanderveen, Dale Brown



Calendar of Events

Township Board Meeting:

3rd Thursday of every month at 7:00pm

Planning Commission:

1st Thursday of every month at 7:00pm

Safety Service Meeting:

Last Thursday of the month

Tyler St. Fire Station at 7:00pm

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Water, Drains and Ditches

Larry Ver Hage, Supervisor

Water is of vital importance to all people and much of the population throughout the world suffer from a lack of water necessary to carry out some of the basic activities of everyday life. Those of us who live here in Blendon usually take water for granted and there are times when we may even find it to be a nuisance.

We need water for our everyday life and most of us in Blendon have wells to provide this water and some of us are connected to municipal water supplies. The wells and municipal supplies provide us with the water we need for drinking, cooking, bathing and other cleaning activities. Throughout the township, water is also being used in agricultural activities such as irrigation and provisions for livestock. We often take water for granted because of its relative abundance in Michigan, but we depend upon water every day as an absolute necessity to our lives.

Recently, the Blendon Township Planning Commission approved a revised version of the Blendon Township Master Plan. This revision was required as a part of the Plan's own requirements to be reviewed every five years. Recognizing the vital role of water in the lives of township residents, they incorporated within the new revised Master Plan a brief summary of a water study. This study summary provides a vision of how water could be made available to the residents of the township in the future should that become a necessity.

The other issue that Blendon Township residents have with water in the township has to do with periods of over abundance. This over abundance is largely connected to Blendon Township's geographical location in relationship to the streams, creeks and rivers in Ottawa County.

Blendon Township is at the top of the watershed in Ottawa County for the Macatawa River, the Pigeon River and the Grand River. What does this mean? It means that much of the water that flows

down into these various rivers before ultimately flowing into Lake Michigan originates in wetlands of Blendon Township. This water is a result of active springs and excess precipitation in the form of rain or snow. It has often been the case that after a heavy rain or rapid snow melt there are large ponds of water forming on the fields and even backing up into residential neighborhoods. The water from these impoundments flows through the various county drains in the township to the streams and creeks which are tributaries to the three rivers that flow to Lake Michigan. Whenever there is a blockage or impedance to the free flow of water at any point along this route, the excess pounding of water persists and this makes for wet basements and soggy ground for many of us here in Blendon Township.

It is important to remember an important distinction when we consider the problem of this excess water. There are two separate and not often connected structures that deal with this problem. The county drains are one of these structures; they are created to function for the purpose of draining the water away from the flooded area and are not to be confused with a road ditch. A road ditch is a

structure that is created by the county road commission when a road is constructed. The purpose of a road ditch is to collect excess water and snow from the road surface. The water or snow that is pushed off or flows off the road then settles into the lower ditch area where it is expected to seep away. These structures are normally not expected to drain the water to another locality. There are exceptions to this, however, and at certain locations the road ditch may function as a minor drain. In the case of these exceptions, the road ditch is generally one which is located in close proximity to a dedicated county drain and

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in these cases the ditches may be structured in such a way as to conduct the accumulated water to this nearby county drain.

Blendon Township does not have direct responsibility for the county drains or the county roads nor does it have a public works department that is capable of effectively dealing with the various issues resulting from these county structures. Blendon does however assist its residents with their requests to obtain assistance from the Ottawa County Drain Commission and the Ottawa County Road Commission for the maintenance of the various drains and road ditches found throughout the township. Blendon Township has an account in the General Fund Budget which is used to help defray the cost of county drain maintenance in the township.

Building Inspection Department

The sluggish economy has affected the housing market statewide. Blendon Township has done very well for the first quarter of 2009. The year started slow, but for the months of February and March we are equal to the number of new housing permits issued for the same period in 2008. Remodeling and accessory building permits have also been active. The desire to live in Blendon Township is very evident, and we have builders in the Township who are building a quality product.

Building & Grounds Department

The Borculo Community Center has been a great asset to the residents of the township. The building has been used for family gatherings during the holiday season and other times throughout the year. Another use, which is growing in popularity, is wedding receptions. The township has received numerous positive comments about the interior of the building. The building also provides a training facility for the Fire Department.

The grounds maintenance team is in place for another season. They did a great job in the cemetery last season. The township has received numerous positive comments on the condition of the cemetery. A lawn sprinkling system has been installed at the Borculo Fire Station and Community Center Building, this will help keep the grounds green all summer.

Zoning Administration and Ordinance Enforcement

The Zoning Department and Planning Commission have been working together the past few months dealing with ordinance changes. The name of the zoning district R-1 Rural Agricultural has been changed to R-1 Low Density Residential. The minimum road frontage requirement for Agricultural Preservation and Low Density Residential has been decreased to one hundred sixty five (165) feet from three hundred thirty (330) and two hundred twenty (220) feet respectively. The Township adopted the Ottawa County Model Ordinance to regulate Ethanol Production Facilities. Another new ordinance for the Township is the prohibition of engine braking on county roads within the township.

The Planning Commission has completed the required five-year review of the Blendon Township Master Plan. Some changes were made which will provide for more versatility for residential, commercial and industrial growth in the township. The complete Master Plan and the Blendon Township Zoning Ordinance are available to the public on the township web site (www.blendontownship-mi.gov).

Don VanderKuyl, Township Treasurer

The 2008 Tax collection year is over. On March 1 of each year I have to turnover to the County all taxes that are not collected to date. After March 1 taxes not paid are delinquent and must be paid to the County Treasurer not the Township Treasurer. The reason for this is that the County Treasurer pays each township for the delinquent real property taxes that each township has coming.

The 2008 Tax collection process went smoothly. Here is one item that needs some clarification. Each tax payer must send a check for the Winter taxes and a separate check for the Summer taxes. The reason for this procedure is that our Auditing Firm wants it done that way. It makes the process of tracking each payment more efficient. If an error is made in processing of the payments they are easier to find and correct. This saves time and that saves the taxpayers money.

The Township accepts payment of taxes at the Township Office during normal business hours, or in the Blue Drop Box after hours and through the mail. If using the US Mail to pay your taxes, the postmark on the envelope is considered the date of payment. This is consistent with what the IRS uses. On the

last date taxes are payable without interest, the Blue Drop Box is checked at 12:00am and emptied at that time. Payments found in the Blue Drop Box the following morning will be considered paid late and the interest will be charged. Also, the Township does not accept payments made on the internet. What can and has happened is internet payments are then mailed to the township and the date on the envelope makes them late. We hope in the future to be able to accept electronic payments.

Here are some interesting facts. The taxpayers of Blendon Township paid to the township in 2008 taxes \$5.8 million dollars. Of the \$5.8 million collected, here is where it went:

Blendon Township Operating Fund \$180,264
Blendon Township Fire Operation Fund \$ 57,722
Blendon Township Fire Equipment Fund \$115,487
Blendon Township Road Fund \$275,227

The rest of the money was passed on to the County, State of Michigan, Zeeland Public Schools, Hudsonville Public Schools, and the Intermediate School District.

Blendon Township Election Commission

Phil De Lange, Chair of the Election Commission

Your local election commission met on March 19 at the Town Hall for their regular pre-election meeting. After appointing election workers to run the school election, they spent some time discussing our precinct boundaries. The present precinct boundaries have been in place for more than 40 years. We looked at some of the inconveniences that we face using the present system. There are two undesirable features of the present precinct boundaries:

1. Many people living near one polling place, must travel several miles to vote in a more distant place. For example, a voter living in Borculo south of Port Sheldon, must drive to the Town Hall on 72nd Ave. while it would be much more convenient for him to vote at the Community Center in Borculo. Meanwhile, a person living on Polk Street near 72nd

Avenue has to drive to the Borculo Community Center or to the Tyler Street Fire Station to vote, while the Town Hall is so much closer.

2. Precinct 2, voting at the Borculo Community Center, has relatively few registered voters (900) while precinct 3, which votes at the Tyler Street Fire Station, has twice as many (2150) and is sometimes too crowded.

The Election Commission is looking to change the current precinct boundaries to minimize these two problems. While these changes may not help everyone, we are confident that they will help most of our citizens.

So when will these changes be finalized? Several months are needed to make the arrangements with Ottawa County officials and then notices will be mailed out to all registered voters who will be affected by the new precinct boundaries. For the school election on May 5, vote in your usual location.

School Election

The annual school election is right around the corner. On Tuesday, May 5, you again have the opportunity and the privilege to participate in the management of our local schools. We encourage you to take a few minutes and let your voice be heard.

Running unopposed for a spot on the Zeeland School Board is Ron Scott. Running for two open positions on the Hudsonville School Board are Richard Lee Parcher, Mark Davis, and Ken Hall.

Both Zeeland and Hudsonville schools are asking for a renewal of operating millage of 18 mills on all property except principal residences. Zeeland is also seeking a renewal of 1 mill for building and site purposes.

The Board of Review

The Board of Review is an appointed Board that Michigan law requires of every municipality and township. This Board is composed of residents of the township who are convened each year to hear appeals from township residents regarding property assessments. This Board acts as a tribunal of original jurisdiction for property assessment appeals and must therefore first hear an appeal before it can be considered by the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

The members appointed by the Township Board to the Board of Review this year are Ken Vanderwall, who is the chairman, Chuck Koning and James Brandt. These gentlemen have worked extended hours this year to consider the relatively large numbers of appeals to come before the Board of Review. The objective of the Board of Review is to oversee the work of the Assessor to assure that there is uniformity and equity in the property system within the constraints of the requirements of the County Board of Equalization and the State Tax Commission.

This year the Board of Review considered ninety-eight appeals and as a result of the Board's actions in the consideration of these appeals, the Township's assessment roll was decreased by just under a half million dollars.

Blendon Township Cemetery

The Blendon Township Cemetery is a place of serenity and peace. The people of Blendon Township appreciate your respect for the rules that have been designed to maintain this cemetery and this atmosphere of peace and serenity.

Our sexton is Jerry Vande Guchte. Please contact him for the purchase of sites.

The rights to a gravesite can be purchased for \$150.00 each and they are sold in lots of two for residents or nonresidents. A grave opening for a resident is \$530.00 and the amount for a non-resident is \$800.00. Sunday or holiday burials require payment of an additional fee of \$120.00.

Every gravestone requires a poured concrete foundation; this is done by the sexton. The size of the foundation required is determined by the dimensions of stone purchased. The purchaser of the stone is required to make settlement with the Monument Company and the Monument Company will contact the sexton to place the work order.

The Cemetery Rules are available for viewing on our website: www.blendontownship-mi.gov

If you have questions, please call the Township Office at 616-875-7707, ext. 27.

Ottawa County Breathes Life into Broadband Dead Zones

A high-speed, fully-mobile wireless broadband network is now available in Ottawa County that provides fully-mobile broadband Internet access to more than 95% of the County's population. The countywide network is the result of a public-private partnership between Ottawa County and iPCS Wireless Inc. Although the wireless signal cannot reach every household in the County, it does provide a broadband option to many residents of Ottawa County who previously had no broadband access.

The deployment of the broadband network was funded entirely by iPCS Wireless Inc., a Midwest-based communications company offering Sprint products and services. The company used an Evolution Data Optimized (EVDO) wireless broadband technology that has the capability to provide continuous high-speed wireless Internet access, even when traveling at freeway speeds. Subscribers to the network can access high-speed Internet from any place in the nation where Sprint provides wireless EVDO coverage, including Hawaii.

If you are one of those residents of Ottawa County who does not have broadband access, or if you are interested in experiencing the capabilities of EVDO, please stop by the Blendon Township Offices between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. on **Wednesday, May 27, 2009** for a Broadband Open House.

Attendees will be able to test the EVDO wireless broadband technology using desktop and laptop computers and try-out optional broadband equipment such as booster antennas that can increase signal strength and WiFi "hot spot" routers. Attendees can also sign-up for the EVDO service and have 30 days to test the broadband network at their home or business. If a subscriber is not satisfied with the broadband service within 30-days after activation, they will receive a 100% refund of any activation, equipment, and service fees.

The cost for the broadband service is \$59.99 (per month) for an unlimited use plan. All residents and business owners of Ottawa County who subscribe for the service are guaranteed to receive a maximum instant rebate of \$200 on the cost to purchase a data access card (i.e. 'Aircard') that is plugged into a laptop or desktop computer. Ottawa County residents will also receive an additional 20% instant discount on optional broadband equipment (e.g. booster antennas and WiFi routers).

Please contact the Township Office (616-875-7707) or the Ottawa County Planning and Performance Improvement Department (616-738-4852) if you should have any questions about the Open House or the wireless network in general.

Blendon Fire Department

Kurt Gernaat, Fire Chief Blendon Twp.

Welcome Spring Clean Up Days!

Along with the exit of all of winter's snow comes the Spring Clean-up! It's time to get into the yard, pick up the brush and the branches, and clean out the shrubs. It also means time for many of you to begin asking again about burn permits and how they are issued in Blendon Township. **Yes, you do need a permit to burn in our township!** Here are a few things to consider before inquiring about a burn permit.

- **Call at least 24 to 48 hours ahead to have a permit issued.**

Why? Well, first of all, we do not have a full-time fire chief, so the burn permit voicemail is only checked once or twice a day, so calling ahead gives him time to check the voicemail and get back to you in a timely manner. Secondly, depending on the circumstances, we reserve the right to come and examine the site prior to issuing the permit, so having adequate lead time helps, should this be the case.

- **The permits can be issued for up to a five (5) day period.**

Because weather is difficult to predict, issuing the permits for more than just one day allows you to burn when the conditions are best. Wind conditions, dryness, and location of the burn should all be considered prior to you lighting the fire. You must have a source of water close by, such as a hose, and you cannot leave the fire unattended while it is burning. You will receive a permit number that you will need in the event that someone asks or stops by to check on the burn.

- **Only proper materials should be burned.** This includes branches, brush, and clean wood. It DOES NOT include trash, plastic materials, tires, etc. These guidelines are established by the DEQ, and you are responsible should they find you burning something that does not meet the standards.
- **The ONLY number to call for a Burn Permit – 875-7707 ext. 26.** When calling this number, please leave your name, address, phone number, day and time you anticipate burning, and what specifically you are planning to burn. We are working at having access to burn permit applications available on our web site in the near future. We will keep you informed as to when this option is available.

Dust Control Schedule 2009

Application 1	Monday, May 4
Application 2	Monday, June 8
Application 3	Monday, July 6
Application 4	Monday, August 3
Application 5	Tuesday, September 8

Applications will occur on or about the dates listed. Actual date of application may vary with weather conditions and completion of grading by the Ottawa County Road Commission.